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Preparations for the International Year of Older Persons

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 47/5 the General Assembly designated 1999 as International Year of Older Persons. In resolutions 50/141 and 52/80, it took note of the conceptual framework (A/50/114) and the operational framework (A/52/328) for the Year. Also in resolution 52/80, the Assembly welcomed the activities undertaken by States, United Nations organizations and bodies and non-governmental organizations in preparation for the observance of the Year and encouraged them to continue their efforts. It also requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. This report has been prepared in response to that request. In section II the core concepts behind the Year, their recent evolution and the current status of the debate are summarized briefly. In section III a number of issues are explored which should help to develop further the concept of a society for all ages. Section IV contains highlights of national, regional and international activities in relation to the observance of the Year. A number of observations and recommendations for the consideration of the Assembly are set out in section V.

II. Core concepts and strategies and their evolution

A. Core concepts and strategies

3. Observance of the International Year of Older Persons will be guided by concepts and strategies which have their origin in the World Assembly on Aging, held in 1982.[1] As lead agency and secretariat for the International Year of Older Persons, the United Nations programme on ageing, located in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is promoting those concepts and strategies in close collaboration with Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, and civil society.

4. The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging,[2] adopted at the World Assembly, establishes the broad foundations for activities on ageing. Its 62 recommendations focus, *inter alia*, on education, employment and income security, housing and the environment, health and hygiene, social welfare and the family. The recommendations formed the basis of a set of target strategies promulgated in 1992 for the year 2001 (A/47/339), which the Assembly, in resolution 47/86, urged States to consult when setting national targets on ageing. Both the Plan of Action and extracts from the related target strategies are being widely distributed to help guide observances of the Year in keeping with the priorities identified by the Assembly.

5. The 18 United Nations Principles for Older Persons, promulgated in 1991 in resolution 46/91, provide guidance in the areas of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity. Promotion of the Principles is the overall objective of the Year.

6. The economic, social and cultural rights of older persons have been set out in general comment No. 6 (1995),[3] adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 24 November 1995. The general comment is being widely distributed.

7. The Vienna International Plan of Action, the United Nations Principles and general comment No. 6, together with the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[4] and other recent internationally agreed programmes, guided the formulation of the conceptual framework for the Year which provides a theme, an overall objective and four facets for debate and action. The theme is "Towards a society for all ages"; the overall objective is the promotion of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons; and the four facets are:

(a) The situation of older persons;

(b) Lifelong individual development;

(c) Multigenerational relationships;

(d) The interplay of population ageing and development.

8. At its fiftieth session the Assembly reviewed the four facets. They were further developed and integrated into the operational framework, which the Assembly reviewed at its fifty-second session. Four dimensions were identified:

(a) Raising awareness: towards a society for all ages;

(b) Looking ahead: beyond 1999;

(c) Reaching out: non-traditional actors;

(d) Networking: research and information exchange.

B. Evolution of core concepts

9. The situation of older persons, the first of the four facets, is addressed comprehensively in the 62 recommendations of the International Plan of Action on Aging and the 18 United Nations Principles for Older Persons. Current thinking stresses the need for a new

"culture of ageing" – one that sees older persons as agents and beneficiaries of development and which finds a sustainable balance between supporting dependency and investing in the continuing development of older persons. The nature and extent of older persons' participation, income security and health depends largely on the opportunities and experiences of their earlier years.

10. Individual lifelong development, the second facet, requires recognition that the lifecourse is a series of interrelated stages and an integrated whole. Well-being in later years depends to a large extent on earlier experiences – on opportunities for healthy lifestyles, lifelong education and skills development, incentives for saving and pension schemes, and measures fostering age-inclusive family and community enterprises and networks.

11. The third facet, multigenerational relationships, has several components. It pertains to the changing generational roles and relations in the family and to age-segregation in such institutions as kindergartens, schools and elder housing. It also pertains to the emergence of communities of interest, such as organizations of older persons and youth. It may be said to encompass multigenerational "citizenship", implying an historical awareness of legacies from past generations and bequests to future generations. Finally, it may pertain to relations between birth cohorts which, in ageing societies, tend to revolve around questions of funding for social security and health care.

12. The fourth facet, ageing and development, addresses the ageing process in its totality. It requires a recognition that ageing is generating new kinds of production, consumption, savings, and investments as well as adjustments in health, education, employment, housing and leisure. These changes are underway throughout the developed economies. They are incipient in the developing countries, where the immediate challenges are enabling older persons and supporting their continued participation and integration in family and community networks.

13. The first two facets of the conceptual framework pertain to the stages of individual life. The second two relate to the social milieu that can enable or hinder individual lifelong development while also determining the quality of life.

14. The steps towards a society for all ages, outlined below, which have been developed collaboratively, are intended to lead to many further explorations of the theme of the Year, in accordance with national and sectoral aspirations and realities. Such explorations should draw on – but not necessarily repeat – the provisions of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and other recently adopted socio-economic standards pertaining, *inter alia*, to social development, human rights, human settlements, children and the advancement of women.

15. In particular, the meaning of a society for all ages may be explored within the framework of social integration, or the "society for all", as elaborated in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,[4] while taking into account the Programme's measures for the alleviation of poverty and the creation of employment.

16. While the basic ideal underlying a society for all and a society for all ages is that of equality and equity for all citizens, the adjustments needed to bring about such an ideal are many and will affect thinking, planning and practical arrangements for decades to come. The 1999 debate can help clarify what are the best adjustments to make, and that, in turn, may help lay the foundations for a research agenda and long-term strategy on ageing into the next decades.

III. Steps towards a society for all ages

17. The idea of a society for all ages may be approached from many directions. The approach taken here is that of the individual lifecourse and that of the social milieu of family, neighbourhood, communities of interest and the macrosocial environment.

18. Individual life and the social environment are being affected by demographic change. The nature and scope of demographic ageing will be explored, among other things, at the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, at a special session of the General Assembly in 1999. The following statistics demonstrate what is involved:

(a) Twenty years have been added to the average lifespan in the second half of the twentieth century. This life extension has been too recent and rapid to have been integrated into our concept of life as a unified whole, a progression of interrelated stages;

(b) The age structures of families are changing. The traditional pyramid of many youth and few elders is giving way to the inverse family pyramid of potentially one child, two parents, four grandparents and several great-grandparents. Two and more generations may be over age 60;

(c) The world is entering a millennium in which, soon, a third of the population will be over age 60. Several

countries will reach that stage by 2030; the world as a whole, by 2150;

(d) In the developing countries the tempo of ageing is more rapid than in the developed ones, and their resources fewer. Already, the majority of older persons live in developing countries, and that proportion will exceed 70 per cent by the year 2030. Currently, every fifth person over age 60 is living in China;

(e) The older population itself is ageing. Today, about 10 per cent of the population over age 60 are already in aged 80 and above, and the proportion will rise to 25 per cent before the year 2050;

(f) The majority of older persons worldwide are women, constituting 55 per cent of the over-60 age group, and 65 per cent of the over-80 age group. The majority of older persons live in urban areas (51 per cent today, and rising).

19. Individual and population ageing are interacting with technological and cultural evolution, generating change and complexity. Within this increasingly ambiguous and interdependent environment, lives progress along many planes – biological, psychological, societal, political, cultural and spiritual. The needs and rhythms of these phases of human development vary as individuals move through childhood, youth, adulthood, midlife, and "young" and "old" old age. Each phase needs a supportive environment, built on indigenous systems, incorporating innovations. Finding a satisfactory synthesis of tradition and innovation in response to ageing is a particular challenge to developing economies as they simultaneously combat widespread poverty.

20. In all cultures, accumulated life experience can make late life a period of potential enrichment and fruition, even though it is also a time of decline and loss. The synthesis of these two factors – fruition and loss – is what gives late life its particular dynamic and its unique contribution of "wisdom" to society.

A. Investing in the phases of life

21. Individual life needs to be viewed and experienced as a unified whole, a continuum of interrelated and overlapping phases. The consequences of certain early life experiences take effect in later years. Late-life realities, and awareness of them, may influence choices made by younger generations. Longevity is transforming the second half of life and has implications for those in earlier stages. Those implications are examined briefly, starting with late life and working back sequentially through the earlier stages.

1. Late life: rewriting the script

22. Today, older persons are demographic and social pioneers. Grandparents now range in age from 35 to 105, and grandchildren from newborns to retirees, giving rise to a wide variety of grandparenting styles.

23. In addition to grandparenting roles, older persons have a wide range of socio-cultural roles or scripts, particularly in pre-industrial cultures. Industrialization has tended, through the institution of retirement, to marginalize older persons in some ways. In some places, the media have stereotyped older persons as patients or pensioners. Post-industrialization promises more flexibility for older persons to recover opportunities they customarily enjoy in pre-industrial settings and to explore new roles and meaning for late life. The net effect is a worldwide population of older persons sufficiently varied, flexible and complex to defy easy categories and clear-cut roles.

24. Programmes to combat poverty, continuing education, literacy campaigns, new technologies, changing values and the addition of years to life are helping older persons explore and express a wide range of "doing, becoming and being". Thus the place of elders in society and their impact on socio-cultural development continue to evolve.

25. Late-life encounters with frailty and finality can be understood as essential components of continuing development. The experience of loss can be transmuted into understanding and compassion. The approach of death is viewed by many as a transition. Thus, the decline experienced in old age can be transmuted into development or wisdom.

26. Despite a prevalence in many places of narrow stereotypical images of older persons, human diversity actually increases with age: 80-year olds are more heterogeneous than eight-year olds, a natural consequence of varied lifetime choices. In varying ways throughout the world, the status, opportunities, entitlements and images of older women are more restrictive than those of older men – discrepancies to be examined in 1999 and further explored in the context of the high-level review to be held in the year 2000. Yet, older women frequently enjoy close and enriching emotional attachments within families.

27. Gender convergences and divergences are frequently noted from midlife onwards. Stated briefly, the divergence is physical: men tend to die earlier and women later, but with more ailments. The convergences are more psychological:

from midlife onwards, many men and women develop potentials which their earlier lifestyles had inhibited – more relational competence and emotional expression for men in the case of some cultures, and more opportunities for developing political and intellectual competence for women in other cultures. These gender trends become less pronounced as societies across the world broaden opportunities throughout the life course for men and women.

28. *For debate*: The developmental potential and diversity and the health care and income security needs of late life need to be explored and supported. New terms, images and scripts are needed. Practical opportunities for participation in socio-economic life need to be preserved and expanded, including, for example, training and access to credit.

2. Midlife: a time of adjustment

29. Midlife has become an important transitional phase. Though it occurs at varying times and with varying schedules across the world, research has shown that it is a developmentally flexible time. It may be considered the prelude to active ageing, as adolescence is to active adulthood.

30. As with youth, the potential of midlife can only be developed in the absence of poverty. Strategies to eradicate poverty include measures to develop a wide range of human potential, encompassing the four kinds of education laid out by the UNESCO Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century,[5] which include: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.

31. *For debate*: Midlife is a time of adjustment in family life, work and personal identity. Some experience it as a time for life review and preview, when they assess past experiences and plan for the future. Two distinct benefits could accrue from educational investments in midlife: release of individual potential, and relatedly, reduction of the potential for disease, decline and exclusions in old age, together with their high human and financial costs.

3. Adult years: a time for building up capital

32. The adult years are a time for launching career and family and, when feasible, for engaging in continuing self-development and civic activities. Through such activities, individuals build up their economic, social and human capital and thereby help ensure well-being in late life.

33. With industrialization, men's and women's lives are increasingly dominated by work or the search for it. Worldwide unemployment mires adult lives in material poverty, particularly in developing countries, and has led to many concentrated efforts to address it, including the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the designation of 1997–2006 as the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.[6]

34. Conversely, employment can create "time poverty" when it occupies the centre of the day, week and year so that other important institutions – family, community, and school – become relegated to peripheral times in the evening and weekend.

35. Opportunities for education, work and leisure could be distributed vertically and flexibly throughout the entire course of life rather than in the more horizontal sequencing now prevalent in many places of education (youth), work (adult years) and leisure (after retirement).This would allow individuals to accumulate human, social and economic capital in their most active years.

36. *For debate*: For those in their adult years, an integrated system including flexible scheduling of work, education, family and social life could be developed. Pre- and post-industrial societies, which tend to be more flexible in time scheduling than industrial ones, may find it possible to explore convergences in their efforts at creating a society for all ages.

4. Youth: when lifestyles for longevity begin

37. Youth today are likely to live longer than their parents, adding longevity to the many challenges already outlined in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.[7] Youth cannot know the distant future, but they can know the likely consequences of early lifestyles, habits of mind and missed or missing opportunities.

38. The consequence of missed or missing educational and work opportunities is likely to be poverty. The consequence of hunger, stress, addictions and other manifestations of material and psychological poverty is chronic disease in mid and late life, restricting one's ability to participate mentally and physically. And the consequence of age-prejudice – a habit of mind cultivated by predominantly youth-oriented media – is the perpetuation of a mental "age ghetto" which is detrimental to society and, obviously, to youth themselves as they grow old.

39. Applying an athletic metaphor, it can be said that longevity requires the ability to envision the years ahead as a challenge requiring certain mental, physical and practical preparations – pacing, saving, and innovating. With tragic exceptions, generated by violence, disease and poverty, lives worldwide are lengthening, becoming more like marathons than short sprints.

40. *For debate*: Longevity challenges youth to acquire foresight and an ability to blend the best elements of innovation and tradition. Foresight and flexibility in the face of change can be fostered in many ways, using local and national resources, including school curricula, community consultations, radio and television debates and dramatic productions which could stimulate inquiry.

5. Childhood: the cradle of longevity

41. The physical, intellectual and emotional foundations of long life are laid in childhood. Consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, much is being said and done about the material and intellectual needs of children. The emotional needs are known to be equally important.

42. Beyond the full range of physical, intellectual and emotional needs of children, there is a need for the presence of calm, insightful and supportive adults. Interactions with such adults can impart knowledge about how to be and how to live together. This knowledge can cultivate resilience and trust, independence and interdependence, which are qualities to guide and sustain an individual throughout the course of life.

43. In industrializing societies, work tends to dominate the parental day, week and year, curtailing the time fathers and mothers have for their children and other family members.

44. With urbanization and migration, age-segregation increases so that children have fewer opportunities for knowing elders including their grandparents.

45. *For debate*: Flexible work scheduling is necessary to allow parents more time with their children. Multigenerational design of the living environment is necessary to allow children and elders to encounter each other. Grandparents and other elders can often fill in time and care gaps left by busy parents and teachers. Older persons can be trained in emotional counselling for children at risk, including street children, orphans and troubled or abused children.

46. Measures to support more age interactions in families, neighbourhoods and society at large could help ensure that childhood is truly the cradle of longevity.

B. Fostering enabling environments

47. Individual lives are influenced by their environments including the interrelated milieu of family, neighbourhood, communities of interest, marketplace and State. All of these are changing and interacting in new ways under the impact of globalization, technological change, cultural evolution and demographic revolution. To assist an age-related examination of these institutions during 1999, some reflections are outlined below.

1. Families: who cares?

48. Families are microcosms of many interacting systems, as highlighted during the International Year of the Family, in 1994. Their caregiving role is examined below.

49. As a primary caregiving system in many societies, the family is the first resource and last resort for individuals throughout life – a launching pad for early life and the landing pad of late life.

50. With demographic ageing, care recipients are changing: there are fewer children needing care and more of the very old. With women's increasing participation in the paid workforce, caregiving patterns are changing, with more men participating in direct and instrumental caregiving. Yet, in most places, family care remains a euphemism for a single – usually female – caregiver. In an ageing world, the double task of caregiving for old and young usually falls to the "sandwich generation", those ranging in age from 40 to 70. Though intensive elder caregiving is generally confined to the last few years of life, it can be burdensome, involving long hours. In contrast with child care, which is characterized by progress towards independence, elder care usually intensifies over time.

51. *For debate*: As families age, family care needs to be increasingly provided by a network of family members and to be supported by organized formal care. Family networks have unique resources – proximity, affection, lifelong commitment and intense knowledge of the older person. Formal care has the vital resources of expertise and money. Family care and formal care are often mediated by community care, combining health and social services. Family-friendly work places are needed, providing opportunities for family leave, job-sharing, respite care and day-care facilities for dependent family members.

2. Neighbourhoods and communities of interest

52. In many parts of the world, neighbours function as an important extension of families. Some neighbourhoods are ageing rapidly. In many cities of the developed world and rural areas of the developing world a quarter or a third of the population are over age 60. Urban design is increasingly age-segregated, in institutions such as kindergartens, schools and elder residences. Apartment dwellings are frequently too small for multigenerational co-habitation. In a follow-up to

Habitat II, barrier-free universal design is being promoted worldwide but has yet to be taken up by builders.

53. The out-migration of youth from the countryside is creating an age imbalance in rural areas. Rural development strategies that include multigenerational cooperatives and enterprises could help stem the rural exodus and restore a better age-balance to rural areas.

54. Another kind of age-differentiation occurs with the rise of communities of interest. Transcending locality, such communities are defined by common intellectual, social, economic and psychological interests. In recent years, associations of retired and older persons have increased in number across the world – a result not only of population ageing but also a response to age discrimination and exclusion. While generating a sense of solidarity among older persons, these associations also support community development, environmental protection, violence-free cities and global peace through direct actions and through partnerships with youth and other organizations. They also give rise to a need for new channels of communications between the age groups.

55. *For debate*: Many rural and urban neighbourhoods are becoming more age-segregated because of migration and age-segregated urban design. Modernization is giving rise to various age-group institutions. These trends calls for measures that will restore easy interaction and collaboration between the generations.

3. Multigenerational citizenship: expanding awareness

56. Beyond neighbourhood and community lies the concept of "multigenerational citizenship", involving an awareness of one's heritage from earlier generations as one participates in creating legacies for succeeding generations, in terms of economic, social, and environmental capital. A culture infused with a sense of multigenerational citizenship would harmonize tradition and innovation and imbue its present undertakings with a broader sense of historical time. Successful follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development depends in large part on fostering a sense of multigenerational citizenship.

57. Multigenerational citizenship, while calling for an expanded awareness of the needs of present, past and future generations, would also encompass the needs and aspirations of all citizens, many of whom may have been marginalized, including refugees, indigenous persons, persons with disabilities and migrants.

58. *For debate*: Multigenerational citizenship encourages expansive levels of awareness, which could be fostered by honouring ancestors as well as descendants when making decisions, as has been the custom among many indigenous and other groups worldwide; and reflecting in debates, plans and programmes on the varied needs and aspirations of all citizens, supporting thereby the establishment of a society for all. In pursuit of expansive and inclusive levels of awareness, there may be contradictions and tensions to negotiate.

4. Macro-societal response

59. As the demographic contours of societies, families and individuals change, so must the production, consumption, savings and investments patterns. Economic, health and education strategies need adjustment. The living environment needs modification.

60. The ageing of individuals calls for a developmental perspective encompassing interventions to promote self-reliance over the entire course of life. As the interventions are improved and refined, they could cumulatively help to expand the capabilities and resourcefulness of each successive birth cohort, enabling each cohort to arrive at old age with improved health status and work and life skills. Moreover, since ageing affects social institutions, including families, neighbourhoods and workforces, measures are needed to ensure that they remain viable and age-integrated.

61. In some ageing societies, the media have called attention to incipient "age wars", citing age-based competition over resources, particularly health care and income security. As populations age, some shift of resources in favour of an expanding population group is necessary. This shift can be made in ways that would not burden the working population, favour one age-group over another, or add to the national debt. Such adjustments may include, in addition to investing in individual lifelong development (as outlined above), increasing productivity so as to increase resources; expanding, as feasible, the female and immigrant workforce so as to balance the old-age dependency ratio; and making economies, as possible, in, for example, military spending.

62. *For debate*: Responses to individual and population ageing have evolved piecemeal. A comprehensive, integrated yet flexible approach is required in order to explore the developmental opportunities of ageing, as they combine with the technological and cultural transitions of our time. Features of this comprehensive approach might include:

(a) Continuing to call attention to questions of ageing in the major international programmes for socio-

economic development launched during the 1980s and 1990s;

(b) Adjusting production, consumption, savings, and investments in keeping with demographic change;

(c) Coordinating four methods of attaining income security: individual savings, occupational pensions, social security, and self-help. Self-help, for example, can encompass part-time work, access to credit for older persons, and family enterprises and cooperatives that include older members;

(d) Combining four kinds of health care: preventive, primary, humanistic, and heroic. Preventive measures were the focus of the 1997 *World Health Report*.[8] The guiding principles of primary health care were set out at the International Conference on Primary Health Care, in Alma-Ata, in 1978.[9] Humanistic care is mainly concerned with improving the quality of life of frail elders, and of ensuring the necessary support for caregivers and caregiving systems. Heroic care is concerned with delaying death by fighting deadly diseases through new technologies;

(e) Integrating four kinds of education into curricula for all stages of life: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be;

(f) Creating a socio-economic environment that fosters accumulation of various kinds of capital throughout the course of life, including old age: economic, environmental, social, human, cultural and spiritual capital.

C. Summary

63. Moving towards a society for all ages will require policies that simultaneously strengthen both individual lifelong development into late life, focused on self-help and independence and, relatedly, enabling environments of families, neighbourhoods, communities of interest and broad societal institutions based on principles of reciprocity and interdependence.

64. It will require an openness to new ways of perceiving, valuing and ordering reality in the next century as longevity increases and population ageing affects the organization of society.

65. Exploring the viability of a society for all ages must be made within the scope of national aspirations and capabilities, for individual lives and the institutions of society will be transformed.

66. The basic idea behind a society for all ages is that all age groups are equally worthy and that no age group should be discriminated against or especially favoured by society.

IV. Highlights of worldwide preparations for the Year

67. Information available to the Secretariat on preparations for the observance of the Year throughout the world is summarized below, under the four headings that correspond to the four dimensions of the operational framework (see para. 8 above) – namely, raising awareness; looking ahead: beyond 1999; reaching out to non-traditional actors; and networking research and information exchange.

68. The Year will be officially launched on 1 October 1998, the International Day of Older Persons, at United Nations Headquarters in New York by the Secretary-General at an event organized by the New York Non-governmental Organizations Committee on Ageing, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. Many Governments and non-governmental organizations are also planning to launch the Year on that day. A logo for the Year was produced by the Department of Public Information during the first quarter of 1998 and distributed worldwide. Several Member States adapted the logo with a national theme. For example, Australia added the word "Australia" and adapted the theme to say "Australia for all ages" or "Perth (etc.) for all ages". Canada made similar adaptations, and Finland created a free-flowing and colourful representation of the logo.

69. As requested by the General Assembly, 78 Governments at the time of writing this report have already established focal points and/or national committees. Focal points have also been established in a number of United Nations agencies and bodies. International networks of non-governmental organizations, comprising millions of members worldwide, are also very active. They include Coalition 99, Federation internationale des associations de personnes agées, the Non-governmental Organizations Committees on Ageing (New York and Vienna chapters), the Geneva International Network on Ageing, the International Federation on Ageing, the International Association of Gerontology, EurolinkAge, EURAG and others.

A. Raising awareness

Member States

70. Numerous countries across the world have adopted the theme of "towards a society for all ages" for their observances of the International Year. Several national committees for 1999 are launching media campaigns on the theme, including Albania, Australia, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Netherlands, and Slovakia. Bahrain will explore the theme through a seminar, lectures and courses in schools, villages, social and health centres and civil associations; televised discussions, and at inter-Arab and international events, including International Volunteer Day, World Health Day and International Day of Families.

71. Malta is organizing an exploration of the meaning of the theme in three areas: intergenerational consensus building; individual lifelong development; and constructive dialogue between social partners, including new work/retirement arrangements. South Africa will examine a society for all ages from three perspectives – vitality, diversity, and interdependence – for ways of achieving late-life vitality of mind and spirit through lifelong healthy lifestyles, celebrating the diversity of older persons, and fostering multigenerational interdependence through mutual encouragement, caring and enablement. Austria is interpreting the theme in two complementary ways: practical measures supporting multigenerational solidarity, and fostering a new culture of aging which promotes self-fulfilment in the third and fourth stages of life and encompasses questions of older persons' participation, dignity, ethics, creativity, spirituality, education, volunteering, media exposure, sports, travel, preparation for retirement and preparation for death. India reported that its approach to a society for all ages would emphasize, through a media campaign being launched on 1 October 1998, lifelong preparation for old age, in view of the fact that few persons plan for their own old age. Long held traditions of security and respect for the aged are being undermined by current socio-economic changes. Japan is promoting lifelong health improvement, lifelong learning, lifelong skills development and lifelong stable and comfortable living environments. New Zealand is promoting individual development at the upper end of life by removing the upper age limit in its Human Rights Act of 1993 prohibiting discrimination in the workplace.

72. A multigenerational emphasis is evident in the plans of many countries. In Zimbabwe, retired social workers and psychologists are assisting the generations to understand each other better and appreciate each other's perspectives through family counselling and role playing. A multigenerational walk is planned, and the plight of older persons in caring for their AIDS-affected children and their orphans is being addressed. Argentina's new draft Bill of Law for Older Persons is promoting an intergenerational way of living. Finland is promoting "municipalities for people of all ages". Town meetings are getting underway in the United States on "transportation for an ageing society". In the United Kingdom, the Millennium Debate of the Age was launched in March 1998. Building upon the initial work of the five study groups set up to discuss current thinking on ageing and look at options for the future, the debate will move on to 12 citizens' juries, giving the general public a chance to debate particular issues over a period of two or three days and come up with recommendations. Subsequently, two citizens' forums of 250 people each will be set up to spend a day deliberating the recommendations of the juries. Five conferences are also planned to discuss these issues among professionals. Finally, a public opinion campaign involving a variety of media and a web site will solicit opinions from every citizen.

United Nations system

73. The gender dimensions of a society for all ages are being mainstreamed in all agencies, with special attention being devoted to the task by the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Both entities emphasize a life cycle approach, from the girl-child to the older woman, believing that empowering younger women is the surest guarantee of securing the well-being of older women and that improving the status of older women will affect the aspirations of the young. Equity and equality in care-giving and income security are other concerns, particularly at a time when Governments are promoting more self-reliance in income security and more family responsibility in care-giving.

74. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is exploring the concept of a society for all ages in terms of the interplay of internal and external factors. Internalized self-perceptions affect the course of life, as do cultural perceptions that have been internalized. External factors shape a person's lifelong access to economic, social and human development opportunities. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is planning a seminar in December 1998 on a society for all ages, along the lines of the four facets of the conceptual framework, with particular attention to the relationship of the individual to society. The United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees sees in the theme an implicit challenge to the invisibility of older persons, particularly the invisibility of older refugees. Recent surveys show that older persons are overrepresented in refugees groups.

75. To the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the creation of a society for all ages entails the management, planning and development of human settlements for all age groups. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations welcomes the developmental orientation of the theme. The International Monetary Fund perceives a society for all ages in terms of its systemic and fiscal implications for individual countries and for the global monetary and trading systems. The International Social Security Association, working closely with the International Labour Organization, sees a society for all ages as a framework within which to address rising social security needs at a time of declining governmental support and for evaluating measures needed for today and those that will be needed in 2020. For the World Health Organization, a society for all ages incorporates values and principles similar to those in its Health for All strategy, which are equity, ethics, a life course perspective, and a gender perspective.

Intergovernmental organizations

76. The Pan-American Health Organization is of the view that a society for all ages means a society without age discrimination – a society in which each individual is provided with opportunities for self-fulfilment and for a meaningful and productive life.

Non-governmental organizations

77. The American Association of Retired Persons has produced a paper entitled, "Strategies for a society for all ages", which covers three topics: the interdependence of the life stages; the interconnectedness of generations; and the interdependence of individuals and society. The text will be circulated to help stimulate worldwide explorations of a society for all ages.

78. The Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations in Resource Dynamics for Social Development (COAL '99) is launching the Year in the Philippines with an event on 3 October 1998. With the support of the Philippine Vice President, it will bring together older persons and several Congressmen in a dialogue on issues facing the old.

79. The International Council for Caring Communities has held, and will hold in the future, a series of meetings which aim to build bridges between private business and professional firms, the United Nations, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations to develop projects, services and products that support the needs of all ages. A conference held in New York in April 1998 focussed on ageing and urbanization. The next event, entitled "Caring Communities for the Twenty-first Century: A Society for All Generations", will be held in New York in February 1999. It will include an international exhibition of projects by architecture and interior design students based on the title of the event.

80. The Geneva International Network on Ageing is organizing a panel discussion on the theme of the Year at the official launch on 1 October 1998 at the United Nations Office in Geneva. The Non-governmental Organizations Committee in Vienna sees the theme as referring to policy-making in addressing the needs of those older persons who cannot meet their own needs and the importance of emphasizing to young and old the necessity for life-long positive individual development for building an environment that is favourable to carrying out this task.

B. Looking ahead: beyond 1999

Member States

81. A number of member States have taken the opportunity during preparations for the Year to initiate strategies, programmes and political structures that will create a "new age for old age", as they adjust their policies in support of the proposed theme for the 1 October 1999 celebration of the International Day of Older Persons. As encouraged and anticipated, the Year is being seen as a starting point for the review and initiation of long-term policy favouring the potential and contributions of older persons.

82. Armenia is implementing an "elder generation" project which aims to improve the social welfare system for older persons in order to integrate them into the economic, public and cultural life of the country. Australia is developing a National Strategy for an Ageing Australia to provide a framework for the well-being of all citizens as they age. The Strategy will coordinate public policy to address the short, medium and long-term consequences of population ageing for individuals, families, communities and local governments. In addition, every Minister in the Federal Parliament has been asked to seek ways to initiate or adapt programmes to assist older persons. Brazil will establish regional and municipal councils of oider persons and will encourage the establishment of a permanent national forum of older persons.

83. The Government of Cyprus has requested the Cyprus Development Bank to undertake a study of services and

programmes provided to older persons and to propose an outline for future policies. The report has now been submitted and is expected to assist policy makers in improving services. A Coordinating Body for the Elderly has been established under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance to promote the well-being of older persons by advising the Government on policy issues. The Senate of the Government of the Dominican Republic approved a Code of Rights of Older Persons on 30 June 1998; it will go to the House of Representatives for final approval later in the year. The Senate also approved the creation of a National Council for Older Persons, which will be attached to the Secretariat of State for Public Health and Social Welfare and will enforce the Code. The Council will also plan activities for 1999.

84. The Government of Ecuador has determined to work with public and private institutions and non-governmental organizations on the implementation of plans, programmes and projects to benefit older persons for 1999 and beyond. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland published a second edition of its *National Ageing Policy to 2001* in 1996. The publication, distributed to all municipalities, contains policy goals and seeks to encourage the implementation of regional ageing care strategies. Eight European Governments are undertaking a joint pilot project to establish information and counselling centres in selected communities to give advice on medical and social services and provide customized assistance to older persons. The project will continue beyond 1999 with scientific monitoring and evaluation.

85. A National Policy for Older Persons is being prepared in India, to be completed by 15 August 1998. The Ministry of Welfare proposes the establishment of a national association for older persons by mid-August 1999. The Government of Kazakhstan has prepared a Plan of Action for 1999 which contains a number of key policy changes and initiatives in support of older persons. In Malta, a White Paper and a Malta Declaration for Aged Care will be drafted for the implementation of an Aged Care Act in 1999. The Government of Mongolia has adopted a population policy which includes a significant section on older persons, some elements of which concern the promotion of intergenerational relations, the promotion of skills development and guaranteed provisions for livelihood. It intends to pursue the implementation of the policy during the Year. The Government of Paraguay is using the Year as an opportunity to prioritize and attain feasible goals, as called for in the recently adopted National Plan of Action for Older Persons. Slovakia is planning a National Programme of Protection for Older Persons, for adoption in 1999.

86. The rights of older persons will be included in the South African Declaration on Human Rights and other relevant national legislation. Legislation on ageing will be developed and implemented, and all existing legislation will be reviewed to determine the impact on older persons. A 10-year South African plan on age management will also be launched, and a national care-giver association will be established. Spain will use the Year to launch several policy initiatives. The existing Gerontological Plan will be updated, and agreement will be reached with the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop new benefits for older persons. Two conferences are planned for January and November, 1999, in Switzerland; the issues to be discussed are autonomy and personal growth; participation: rights and duties; well-being and health; social security and solidarity; and traditions and changes. The United States of America will hold a conference in the spring of 1999 on longevity and active ageing. It will be future-oriented to showcase federal policies, programmes and plans for an ageing population.

United Nations system

87. The Committee for Development Planning tackled the subject of old-age security in a changing global context at its thirty-second session, in May 1998. Their purpose was to look at the design and management of old-age security systems, with a focus on the needs of developing countries. The final report (E/1998/34) offers conclusions and recommendations which are designed to be of help rather than prescriptive in nature. In cooperation with the non-governmental organization HelpAge International, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held a workshop on the Mekong Initiative for Ageing at which national plans of action and projects in support of the Year were designed and reviewed. They served as a preliminary contribution to the formulation of a regional plan of action on ageing. A meeting on a plan of action on ageing in Asia and the Pacific will be held in Macau from 28 September to 1 October 1998. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) held a Caribbean Forum on Health and Aging from 27 to 30 May 1998 to draft a Caribbean charter on health and aging.

Intergovernmental organizations

88. A communication on policies for ageing societies will be ready for adoption in September 1998 by the European Commission, which will also propose further action by the European Union as a follow-up to the Year.

Non-governmental organizations

89. The Age Care Association of the Gambia works with limited resources to assist in the provision of relief assistance to the elderly poor. It also seeks to identify small-enterprise development schemes in which older persons can become involved, and so reduce their dependency. Fondation de France is planning to hold an international seminar in September 1999 for local French politicians and decision makers in charge of policies for older persons. The topic will be "Innovation in care for the elderly: ageing in the city". The plan is to showcase 25 cities from around the world with innovative projects for older persons.

90. The International Federation on Ageing plans to launch the publication of the first edition of *State of the World's Older Persons* in 1999. The International Institute on Ageing (Malta) (INIA) conducts a number of training programmes in gerontology, demographics, and geriatrics each year. From 4 to 6 December 1997 the Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing Populations in the Mediterranean Region was held, organized by INIA. It was the first in a series of regional conferences that will lead to a global memorandum on ageing, charting the needs and expectations of each region within the context of a growing older population. HelpAge International will launch an ageing and development report in June 1999 to improve the situation of older persons in developing countries.

C. Reaching out to non-traditional actors

91. One of the strategies in preparation for the Year has been to reach out to those segments of the population and sectors of society which have excluded (even if unintentionally) older persons in their work or have taken a traditional approach to ageing, and which may now be open to new ideas and approaches. Efforts have also been made to reach out to the younger generation to help foster multigenerational relationships and encourage the young to see beyond the traditional stereotypes of older persons and gain a more positive image of the ageing process and how it will affect them.

Member States

92. Albania will hold a media debate on ageing and multigenerational issues, while Australia will concentrate on the development of partnerships of business, professional organizations and communities to formulate practical initiatives of benefit to older persons. Ethiopia has established a focal-point committee which has planned a variety of activities, such as television and radio dramas related to older persons and the Year and the production of stamps and calendars. In Germany, an international media congress will be held, involving international media representatives to discuss ways of improving the portrayal of older persons in the media. They will also discuss the content and frequency of television and radio programmes for older persons.

93. In order to strengthen traditional intergenerational relationships, programmes with older persons, children and youth will be launched on 26 January 1999 in India. In Malta, activities will be arranged in schools, universities and other educational institutions, by the private sector and voluntary organizations. Programmes will be broadcast on local radio and television. Panama is organizing a literary contest in secondary schools on the subject of lifestyle and health in older persons. Slovakian national, regional and local media will carry special coverage of the Year, particularly with regard to mutual tolerance and respect between the generations. The media will also focus on life-long development of the individual and changing multigenerational relations in family and society. South Africa plans to promote the involvement of organized trade and industry for the Year by, for example, offering discounts to older persons on products and transmitting positive images of ageing etc.

United Nations system

94. Outreach to the media is being spearheaded by the Department of Public Information, United Nations Secretariat, which, earlier this year, began an information campaign to raise awareness of the Year and its objectives. Activities to date have included outreach through written, radio and television productions and special briefings and mailings. The campaign has collaborated with the lead agency, information centres throughout the United Nations system and members of civil society. The Department has collaborated with other actors in the production of a logo and related guidelines for the Year; publicizing the Conference and Ageing and Urbanization (29-30 April 1998, United Nations Headquarters); and producing a press kit, poster and conference for the launch of the Year (1 October 1998, United Nations Headquarters). As part of the Department's global network, the United Nations information centres and services are planning global activities for the launch and throughout the Year. A series of UNTV and United Nations radio programmes, an exhibit, collaboration on an international video conference and other activities are planned. Outreach to the development community and youth will be the focus, in January 1999, of the Global Meeting of

Generations: Vision and Action for Equitable Development in the Twenty-first Century, to be held in Washington, D.C. The Meeting, in which the United Nations Development Programme is the main partner, will seek to stimulate a dialogue between the generations to shape global development for the future. After national dialogues throughout 1999 and 2000, a second conference is scheduled for 2001, to adopt a statement on visions for development in the twenty-first century.

Intergovernmental organizations

95. The Pan American Health Organization will highlight successful intergenerational programmes in the Latin American region and disseminate information on model programmes.

Non-governmental organizations

96. The American Association of Retired Persons is organizing an international expert group meeting in 1999 on images of older women in the media. Media representatives will be invited to explore stereotypes of older women in the media and ways to improve those images. The member organizations of La Fédération internationale des associations de personnes agées (FIAPA) has undertaken a survey, entitled "Adolescents of yesterday and today". A questionnaire intended to create a dialogue between the generations was drafted. The objective is to discuss issues and determine the place of young and old in the next century. A meeting to be held in Paris on 8 October 1999 will present the results of the survey and will provide an opportunity for the generations to gather and exchange views. The following day, an intergenerational walk will be held.

97. The International Immigrants Foundation is planning to host a press conference at United Nations Headquarters for the foreign media on 1 October 1998 to publicize the Year among the diverse ethnic communities in the United States of America. The Netherlands Platform for Older Persons and Europe and the European Institute for the Media have launched a project entitled Changing Media in an Ageing Society, to strengthen the relationship between non-governmental organizations and media services. Some of the initiatives under way include the Media-Age Network of journalists and broadcasters, the Media-Age Research Group, an on-line news service, and a Conference on Changing Media in an Ageing Society towards the end of 1998. The Vienna Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Ageing, comprised of organizations affiliated with the United Nations Office at Vienna, is planning a three-day conference to launch the Year on 1 October 1998.

D. Networking, research and information exchange

98. An ongoing requirement in the area of ageing has been the improvement of research and in the exchange of information at all levels. The Year provides an opportunity for improving relevant initiatives.

Member States

99. The Government of Albania will create a national calendar and data bank of initiatives to assist in the promotion of information and collaboration on ageing. The Government of Argentina will create four awards to promote scientific studies on ageing and a scholarship programme for individuals and institutions and will establish a documentation centre. The Government of Brazil will train 700 technicians in social gerontology, and will offer technical and financial support to programmes, research and meetings on issues of ageing. The Government of Cyprus is planning to undertake a study to establish a minimally acceptable standard of living, which is expected to lead to the upgrading of public assistance scales, 40 per cent of the recipients being older persons. An Internet page on Estonian older persons will be opened by the Department of Social Affairs, Government of Estonia. The advisory committee for the elderly of the state of Hamburg, Germany, will organize a meeting in October 1988 to analyse the results of interviews with foreign residents from six countries. The objective is to document important data on older migrants.

100. Policy research is planned in Ghana for the purpose of creating a database on older persons. The Government of the Netherlands has established a Web site "Seniornet" to facilitate the exchange of information. The Government of Kuwait is undertaking field surveys of service provision and of the number and situation of older persons in ill health still living in their own homes and hospitals, in order to improve policy implementation. The Slovakian Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the International Centre for the Study of the Family will conduct a sociological survey, which will solicit the opinions of older persons living in households as to the provision of social services. The resulting data will be used to formulate general objectives for assistance for older persons and the improvement of intergenerational relations. A National Observatory for Older Persons will be launched in Spain, and a cross-European longitudinal study of ageing will be initiated. The Population Division of the International Programs Center, United States Bureau of the Census, will issue a revised volume of the *Our Aging World* publication in 1999. Uruguay's National Institute of Solidarity with

Older Persons is in charge of organizing a meeting entitled Older Persons: Exchange of Experiences, to be held in Montevideo on 1 and 2 September 1998, the second in a series of regional meetings involving Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay.

United Nations system

101. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), together with the non-governmental organization, Institute of Public Administration, and the NGO Committee on Aging, New York, have launched a research project on the living conditions of older people in urban communities. A global report of their findings and recommendations will support the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and the Habitat Agenda.[10] The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is undertaking two major research programmes which will contain ageing-specific elements during the 1998–1999 biennium. One will address issues of older women vis-á-vis violence against women, women's health, and women's life cycle: the girl child and older women; the other will address the role of older women in supporting households and families in which the principal woman migrates.

102. The 1998 revision of United Nations population estimates and projections, prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, will for the first time disaggregate the group of those 80 years and over in five-year increments. In addition, the 1999 *Report on World Population Monitoring* will contain a chapter on population structure, which will include sections on changing population age structures and socio-economic aspects of changing age structures. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is holding an international technical meeting on population ageing during October 1998. The aims are to review policy initiatives, national mechanisms and priority issues arising from population ageing since the International Conference on Population and Development; to draw the attention of policy makers to the social and economic implications of population ageing and the needs of the elderly; and to produce a set of recommendations to improve the quality of life of older persons.

103. The Inspection and Evaluation Service of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) carried out an analysis of the problems and issues relating to older refugees and produced a study which highlights three crucial issues affecting the older population: social disintegration, the erosion of social support systems through economic decline, and the dispersal of families. The UNHCR Senior Management Committee is dealing with the issue of older refugees on an ongoing basis. The Population Programme Service of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is preparing two papers to examine the interrelationships between the ageing of rural populations, agricultural production, and food security. The FAO Women in Development Service has focused on the age of rural populations by introducing "age"as a variable in the tools used at the country level for participatory rural appraisals and socio-economic and gender analysis. Subsistence agriculture is increasingly the responsibility of women, and those women will become increasingly older.

104. The International Monetary Fund studies on social security and public pension schemes are ongoing. A book *Social Safety Nets: Issues and Recent Experiences* was published in 1998. The IMF is actively involved in studying the social consequences of economic reform programmes and the design of appropriate safety nets for older persons adversely affected by reforms. The International Social Security Association (ISSA) is planning a research project to examine current and future research efforts in the area of pension reform. The Pan American Health Organization continues to work on a research agenda on population ageing and the development of regional training programmes. The World Health Organization (WHO) has initiated action to establish a programme of research on ageing and health. The Expert Committee on Determinants of Healthy Ageing will meet in December 1998.

Intergovernmental organizations

105. On 1 and 2 October 1998 the European Commission will hold a conference in Vienna on the theme "Towards a society for all ages". The European Parliament will organize, through the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and in association with the European Commission, a conference on the theme "Senior citizens in the twenty-first century", with the participation of members of senior citizens organizations from all member States of the European Union. The conference will take place in Brussels on 1 October and 2 October 1998. The final report will include recommendations to member States and the Commission for contributions to the actions of the United Nations for the Year.

Non-governmental organizations

106. Eurolink Age is acting as a central clearing house for collecting and disseminating information on activities of the European Union. They are to publish a special supplement

to their information bulletin in English, French and German and will act as a link to European intergovernmental bodies to promote action for the Year. The International Institute on Ageing (Malta) (INIA) established a network called Twinage at the end of 1996, which aims to pool resources for research and training on ageing between developed and developing countries. The Netherlands Platform for Older Persons in Europe, in cooperation with the European Institute for the Media, launched an Internet service called MediaAge in 1998. The site covers policy-related issues on ageing and ageing societies.

107. The Non-governmental Organizations Committee on Aging (New York) launched a project in 1997 to locate national affiliates of the non-governmental organizations that are members of the Committee and put them in touch with each other in order to promote the Year and the topic of ageing. The Committee is also arranging a global video conference to be held during the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development, in 1999. Country-level discussions are being held on issues and actions planned for the next century on ageing, which will be reported on during the video conference.

108. In July 1999 the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues will publish a special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* in honour of the International Year. The focus will be on policies and issues at the international level. The Fifth World Congress on Physical Activity, Aging and Sports, will be held in Florida, United States, August 1999, with the theme "Active aging in the new millennium". The Congress will explore the impact of physical activity on the lives of older persons and the effect of the ageing process on physical activity among older persons.

E. Coordination by the lead agency

109. The United Nations programme on ageing, the lead agency and secretariat for the Year, has coordinated international activities and provided conceptual leadership, with the ultimate aim of strengthening policy development at the national level.

1. From conceptual exploration to policy development

110. The themes and concepts underlying the Year have been presented at numerous national and international conferences over the past two years by the staff of the secretariat. At a symposium held at the Sixteenth World Congress of Gerontology in Adelaide, Australia, in August 1997, the four facets of the conceptual framework were elaborated upon. The facets are being explored in depth in the forthcoming publication *World Ageing Situation*, No. 3. A special double issue of the *Bulletin on Ageing* (Nos. 2/3, 1997), with a guest editor, explored multigenerational relationships.

111. The issue of caregiving was named as a priority subject for discussion in the operational framework. As a result, an expert group meeting was held in Malta from 30 November to 2 December 1997 on the gender dimensions of caregiving and older persons. Experts from all regions discussed the provision of informal caregiving for older persons by women and its economic and social consequences. Recommendations were made for Governments to create a more gender-sensitive and supportive caregiving environment. A publication will be issued in the last quarter of 1998. A report based on the deliberations and outcome of the meeting was presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, at which resolution 42/4, "Older women and support: gender and caregiving" was adopted. Work in this area is an ongoing priority during the Year. The secretariat has been continuing its collaboration with the West Virginia University Center on Aging, an advisory centre on rural ageing. Plans for an expert group meeting on rural ageing in 1999, leading to an international conference in July 2000, are ongoing. Both events will focus heavily on developing countries.

112. The sixteenth World Congress of Gerontology adopted the Adelaide Declaration, which, among other things, called for the International Association of Gerontology and the United Nations programme on ageing to collaborate in preparing a research agenda on ageing for the next century. With the financial support of the Novartis Foundation for Gerontological Research, an initial expert group meeting to draft a framework for the research agenda will take place in February 1999. It is envisaged that the agenda will have a major impact on national and international public policy on ageing in the future, with a particular focus on developing countries.

113. In its resolution 52/80, paragraph 5, the General Assembly encourages States, with the assistance of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, to formulate policies and programmes on ageing. The secretariat for the year intends to use the research agenda to form the basis of a possible long-term strategy on ageing during the period 1999–2001, for possible adoption in 2001. An interregional meeting of experts on policy for a society for all ages, to take place in mid-1999, and also provide key contributions to the strategy. Subject to the receipt of extrabudgetary resources, expert meetings are also envisaged

on employment and older persons and on the social technologies of traditional societies.

2. Coordination of international activities for 1999 and beyond

114. Within the context of the work of the General Assembly and Commission for Social Development, the secretariat for the Year has continued to liase with member States, in particular through the Consultative Group for the International Year of Older Persons. Meetings of the Group were held in February, May and September 1998.

115. As part of the United Nations efforts to support national preparations for the Year, at the request of Member States, representatives of the lead agency participated in the First Congress on Older Persons (Spain, February 1998), the Congress of the Netherlands Association of Gerontology (Rotterdam, March 1998), and the Conference of European Experts Preparing for the International Year of Older Persons (Bonn, March 1998).

116. Liaison with non-governmental organizations has continued. The lead agency participated in the Global Conference of the International Federation on Ageing (October 1997), the symposium of the Fédération internationale des associations de personnes agées (October 1997), and the National Congress of the Federazione Italiana Pensionati Attivita Commerciali (June 1998). The lead agency has collaborated closely with the Non-governmental Organizations Committee on Aging (New York) on the planning for the launch of the Year, on 1 October 1998. Coalition 99 has continued to translate the secretariat newsletter "Countdown to 1999" into French and Spanish, and distribute it. The lead agency has also played an advisory role in the development of the International Federation on Ageing publication *State of the World's Older Persons*.

117. Within the United Nations system, the lead agency was, in 1998, designated as a "theme leader" on demographics, health and life-long planning for the 1999 Global Meeting of Generations, organized by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Development Conference. The Meeting offers an excellent opportunity during the first part of the Year to promote a multigenerational dialogue on development issues. The lead agency will present a paper at, and take part in, the Technical Meeting on Population and Ageing, organized by UNFPA (Brussels, 6–9 October 1998). Discussions are ongoing with the World Health Organization's Healthy Ageing Programme in exploring joint efforts towards a policy-oriented research agenda. Discussions are also ongoing with regard to the participation of ESCAP and the other regional commissions in the interregional meeting of experts on a society for all ages, to take place in mid-1999.

3. Supporting national activities

118. With the assistance of the Government of the Netherlands, work will begin in the last quarter of 1998 on a database of "best practice" national policies, with the objective of supporting policy development in developing countries. The database will be located on the Web site of the Division for Social Policy and Development.

119. During 1997, a directory of national infrastructures on ageing was compiled and distributed. The "Local agenda on ageing in the 1990s" and "Menu of ideas" for activities at the national level have been issued so as to stimulate action by all actors for the Year. Two projects were completed, with the assistance of a consultant, to showcase projects in action. The first was a compendium of the achievement of national targets on ageing, which were prepared in 1992 to assist member States in setting targets to the year 2001 in those countries lacking universal welfare and pension infrastructures. The compendium illustrates methods of achieving the targets with examples of operational projects. The second project was a compendium of community programmes for older persons in newly ageing countries, which lists operational projects at the community level. Both of these projects will be posted on the Web site of the Division for Social Policy and Development.

120. The Trust Fund for Ageing, created in 1982 on the occasion of the World Assembly on Ageing, has seen its resources shrink over the years, to the point where it is now unable to award any funding to developing countries, which continue to apply to the Fund in numbers. The secretariat is using the Year as an occasion to attempt to revitalize the Fund by highlighting the need for technical assistance for developing countries in the area of ageing.

4. Promotional and information campaign

121. An information kit will be ready for the launch of the Year. It is being prepared by the Department of Public Information and the lead agency, with the assistance of the non-governmental organization Age Concern. A poster for the Year, produced by the American Association of Retired Persons, will be issued for the launch. The "Countdown to 1999" newsletter, which provides up-to-date information on governmental and United Nations system activities for 1999, continues to be published. All issues are posted on the Web site for the Year maintained by the Division for Social Policy and Development (www.un.org/esa/socdev/iyop.htm) which

has recently been upgraded with the assistance of a specialist. A calendar of events for the Year, and a list of national focal points and other background and information materials are maintained on the Web site and regularly updated.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

122. A wide range of activities have begun worldwide in observance of the Year. Nearly 80 countries have established national committees, most involving a wide range of members. The General Assembly may wish to invite countries that have not yet begun their observances of 1999 to do so now. It may wish to invite countries to report on their observances at the plenary sessions of its fifty-fourth session, at which it was decided (resolution 52/80) four plenary meetings should be devoted to the follow-up to the Year, which should take place at an appropriate global policy-making level.

123. Promoting investments in human development over the entire lifespan and in preserving and supporting age-integrated social institutions are worldwide challenges. In that regard, the General Assembly may wish to invite national committees to consider the desirability of addressing these challenges through a set of principles for a society for all ages and/or practical strategies towards a society for all ages aimed at mainstreaming ageing into programmes and policies, while ensuring that the immediate developmental, income-security and health care needs of older persons are met.

124. The power of the media to influence images of ageing and opportunities for older persons needs to be recognized and trends towards negative stereotyping and the exclusion of older persons need to be addressed. In that regard, the Assembly may wish to encourage the media to follow-up on the official launch of the International Year on 1 October 1998 by launching or intensifying a media campaign in January 1999, focused on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and the theme of a society for all ages, and invite organizations of older persons and others to engage the media in a debate on ageing.

125. The institutions of civil society at the local, national and international levels are playing a vital role in promoting the Year, often through multigenerational and multisectoral collaboration. The General Assembly may wish to commend those efforts and invite those institutions to focus their observances of the International Day of Older Persons (1 October) in 1999 on the theme of "late life potentials and contributions in a new age".

Notes

[1] See *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July–6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16).

[2] Ibid., chap. VI.

[3] See E/C.12/1995/16.

[4] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] Learning the Treasure Within (Paris, UNESCO, 1996).

[6] General Assembly resolution 50/107 (II).

[7] General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex.

[8] Geneva, WHO.

[9] See "Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata" (CPHC/ALA/78.10).

[10] See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.